



## Robert Noel Burns

February 3, 1933 - July 3, 2013

Robert's Life Story: All who knew Robert Burns would agree that he was the heartbeat of wherever he was. He had a zest for life that was contagious, and his love for the water was easy to see. A more devoted family man would be hard to find as Bob treasured his wife, children, and grandchildren more than life itself. He lived life on his own terms and was never concerned with building wealth according to the world's measure. Bob leaves behind a timeless legacy that will be proudly carried on by those who follow him. The dark days of the 1930s were some of the most trying days we have ever faced as a nation as the entire decade was cloaked in the hardship of the Great Depression. It was within these difficult days that a young couple from Detroit, Michigan, was able to shift their focus to a joyous time within their own lives as they welcomed a healthy baby boy into their hearts and home on February 3rd. Robert Noel was the older of two boys born to his parents, Harry and Charlotte (McKenzie) Burns, and he was raised in the family home alongside his brother, Richard. His father worked for a newspaper in Toledo, Ohio, as an insurance agent, and also owned some bars with his family. Bob, as he was most often known, attended local schools and went on to graduate from Cooley High School in the early fifties. Throughout his entire life Bob highly valued education. After graduating from high school he went on to earn his bachelor's degree from Michigan State University. From there he earned his law degree from University of Michigan, but he never took the bar exam or practiced law. Not to be forgotten during his years as a young man was Bob's

introduction to the young woman who would forever hold the key to his heart while he was at Michigan State University. Her name was Shirley Lovelace, and they were introduced through mutual friends while at an outing at Rascal House Bar. A dating relationship ensued, and it wasn't long before Bob and Shirley were deeply in love. With a desire to establish a life together the sweethearts were married three years later, on October 25, 1959, in Detroit. Together they were blessed with four sons, Tracy in 1960, Dean in 1962, Steve in 1964, and Jim in 1967. Sadly, Tracy died shortly after birth. It was also as a young man that Bob served in the United States Air Force during the Bay of Pigs campaign. Although he was deployed to Cuba, he only made it as far as Florida before his mission was called off. A savvy businessman, Bob had a successful career. He served as vice president of Advance Mortgage Company in Detroit. When they were later sold to Citicorp, they were going to transfer him to Toronto. Since Robert did not want to raise his boys in Canada, they moved to a cabin on the Little Manistee River in Irons and purchased the Big Bass Lake store in 1974. Soon after, he opened Irons Real Estate office. A vital part of the community, Bob developed several associations on lakes around Irons, and was an integral part of the development of Skinner Park on the Irons Tourist Association grounds. During their later years Bob and Shirley also had a home in Big Pine Key, Florida, where they spent their winters. They developed a close friendship with Bob and Linda Whaley while in Florida. Although spending time with his family was always first and foremost in Bob's eyes, his life was enriched by so many other things he enjoyed. He loved numerous outdoor activities like fishing, hunting, hiking, and snow skiing. Basically, Bob was a nature lover who appreciated everything about being outdoors. He taught his children, and later his grandchildren, all about land conservancy both in word and in deed as he purchased a former ski area called Ward Hills and developed it into a private community. Bob loved the water and recreation, and had his nautical captain's license, which would allow him to fish the big waters both in Michigan and Florida. Bob enjoyed vintage cars, and he watched the Tigers and Red Wings when he could. He

loved traveling, especially to Cuba and the Caribbean. Bob would have loved to go back to Cuba and was excited to have been there when they kicked the “gringos” out. In fact, Bob was one of the last to leave. His outgoing personality naturally made him a great friend to have, and he had numerous “best” friends including his hunting partner, Ted Nugent. His business partner, Kevin Walsh, was someone he met while vacationing, and they became like brothers to one another. Driven, successful, and laid back are words that come to mind when reflecting on the life of Robert Burns, but it was his love for those around him that will be his greatest legacy. Providing for his family was behind his drive to succeed, and his devotion to the community he called home for many years was appreciated by countless others. Bob selflessly cared for his wife during her time of great need, and in so doing he provided a genuine example of what true love and commitment is. He will be dearly missed and warmly remembered. Robert N. Burns passed away on Wednesday, July 3, 2013 at his home surrounded by his family. He will be greatly missed by his sons Dean (Leslie) Burns, Steven Burns, and Jim (Becki) Burns all of Irons, his grandchildren Anna, Stuart, Samantha, and Chris, his brother Richard A. Burns of Hudson, Florida, his business partner Kevin Walsh, and his good friends Bob and Linda Whaley of Big Pine Key, Florida. A Service of Remembrance will be held for Robert at 10:30 AM on Saturday, July 20 at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville. Graveside services will follow at Lakeview Cemetery in Irons. Friends are invited to greet his family on Saturday from 9:30 AM until time of services at the funeral home, and at a luncheon to be held following the graveside services in Irons. Those who wish to make memorial contributions are asked to consider Mercy Hospice of Cadillac.